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COUNTRY Argentina

DATE DISTR. 20 JUL 49

SUBJECT Arrest of Communist Labor Leaders in Mar del Plata

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1. The press version of the recent detention by the police of several leading Communists in Mar del Plata was pure fabrication.*
2. Prior to Peron's regime, the Communists controlled the construction workers' union in Mar del Plata, which is one of the strongest trade unions in that city. After Peron gained power, the union divided into two factions. The traditional group, controlled by the Communists, became known as the Sindicato Obrero de la Construcción; the other faction, controlled by the Peronistas, is known as the Union Obrera de la Construcción. However, at the time of the threatened strike among the construction workers, the Communists were directing the activities of both factions.
3. Around the first of June 1949 the Secretariat of the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT) intervened the Union Obrera de la Construcción and publicly announced that it refused to recognize the existence of the Sindicato Obrero de la Construcción. At the same time the CGT ordered new negotiations for the consideration of a petition for wage increases. The negotiations were to be conducted through the interventor.
4. This measure was undoubtedly aimed at the Communist leaders of the Sindicato who had been negotiating the increase. Consequently, they refused to recognize the intervention of the Union and called a strike of all union members, Communists and non-Communists alike. In view of this action, the police arrested several Communist union leaders. Those detained were as follows:
 - a. Hector de los Reyes, secretary general of the Sindicato, former Communist candidate for provincial deputy in 1946, and former candidate for mayor of Mar del Plata in the elections of 14 March 1947.
 - b. Jorge da Costa, leader of the Communist youth in Mar del Plata.
 - c. Alberto Maldonado
 - d. Juan Antonio Rodriguez
 - e. Volpino Cortez

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5. The following Communists would have been arrested had they been in Mar del Plata at the time of the incident:
 - a. ✓ Jesus Antonio Besoytaroube, organizational secretary of the Sindicato.
 - b. Alfredo Bonini, voting member of the Sindicato's committee.
6. Ninety percent of the construction workers in Mar del Plata are members or sympathizers of the Argentine Communist Party. Seventy-five percent of the Sindicato's leaders are Communists.

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 Comment. Around the end of June 1949 the Argentine press reported that the police of Mar del Plata, in collaboration with a police delegation from Buenos Aires, had uncovered a Communist plot and had confiscated propaganda material and arms in Mar del Plata. As a result of the discovery of the plot, several leading Communists were detained.

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